

ANALYSIS

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THE PRIVATE LANGUAGE PROBLEM

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THIS article does not, by any means, touch on all the problems of the private language puzzle. Further, it does not pretend to treat fully the problems it does raise. I just wish to consider certain instances of what might be called private languages, noting in what sense they are private and, at the same time, hoping to show what part sensations play in understanding those languages.

I. *A.* Let us take one example of what might be called a private language. Suppose that I alone see and that I construct a visual language ; or, to make it simpler, that I alone see and that I make visual sentences in accordance with ordinary English usage. My hearers, although they are possessed of all the other senses, have never seen, do not now see, have no after images and (e.g.) no sensations of red when the eye is pressed.

The question is : In what sense would my visual language be private to me ? In what sense would my hearers understand my visual sentences ?

It is evident that my visual language would not be meaningless to my blind friends in a behaviouristic sense. Colour words play some part in their own language game. They would analyse statements I make about colours in terms of certain behaviour perceived by them through their senses of hearing, touching etc. I might, for example, have always spoken of magenta and orange as "clashing" and they would learn that to say two such shades are in close proximity means that if I looked at them then I would have an unpleasant feeling. Again, I might say red gives me a sensation of warmth. They have noted that when I say I see certain pinks I shudder ; that when I see a green light in such and such a position etc. I drive over the crossing in my car. In fact, the only behaviour-criteria denied them are those they

would have observed by sight, if they had not been blind. Thus there is a behaviouristic loss of meaning in that their analyses of my visual statements must be—of necessity—in terms of the sensations they are physically capable of having. And, to bring out this point more clearly, we need only consider how the behaviouristic meaning is gradually lost if I proceed to deprive them of their other faculties one by one. The more faculties I deprive them of the less meaning do my statements have for them. To imagine a person with only one "sense" is to imagine a person capable of only a single analysis of all physical-object sentences i.e. in terms of that "sense". And thus, as I proceed along this course of destruction the more private (in this sense of private) do my visual sentences become. The end of the series is reached when I am a lonely existent.

But colour words can mean something to my blind friends in a more "direct" way. Supposing they are all provided with very fine and ingenious colour-detecting instruments. Each colour and variation of shade is recorded by hands on a dial, which hands are felt by the blind men. The instruments are as sensitive to colours as my eyes are. If I am the only person who sees and I say "That chair is brown", "This box is green", the blind men are in a happy position. With their instruments they can check every colour statement I make—and keep pace with me. This means that, although blind, they can manipulate colour words—when used in this physical-object sense—as effectively as I can. They could, that is, take one coloured patch after the other and say, "This is green, this red, this blue" and so on, each variation being truthfully recorded on their instruments, the instrument readings being observed by them tactually. If, therefore, understanding colour words is to be defined as being able to use them in this physical-object sense, then blindness is no ultimate bar.

What then is the difference between the way I understand colour words and the way my blind friends do?

Now when I make physical-object sentences concerning colours it is found that, with the aid of their fine instruments, the blind can check, i.e. verify or refute, such sentences. But what analysis do they make? What do these sentences mean to them? How do they come to know which are true or false? I say (e.g.), "This wall is yellow". They feel the wall and then apply their instruments to check my assertion that it is yellow. That it is yellow is analysed in terms of further tactual sensations i.e. certain instrument-tactual-sensations are followed by certain dial-tactual-sensations. When I say, "This wall is yellow" the

statement does not mean (to the blind men) something like, "If we look then we shall have such and such visual sensations"; but, "If we have such and such tactual sensations then certain others will follow". The blind men manipulate colour words, but, when I make a statement of this kind, they take the colour words used in it as predicting for them tactual sensations of a certain kind. Consider this case: I say, "I am seeing a red after-image". (It must be noted that this is not as meaningful to my blind friends as "This is a red box.") The statement has some meaning for my hearers. They could—using their instruments—say I was having a sensation of a colour to which they point (giving a sample of red). And if I say it was not that particular shade, then they could ask for more information and make the correct selection from their sample pieces of coloured paper. But the point is that they only find a meaning in terms of what they are physically capable of having, i.e. tactual etc. sensations, and not visual sensations. They can manipulate colour words; but manipulate tactually, not visually. My visual sentences are analysed into tactual sensation sentences—or any other sense or senses of which they are not deprived.

I have said that the blind men can use colour words only in the physical-object sense (e.g. with reference to chairs and tables) and that when I speak of my sensations being of certain colours (e.g. red after-images) they understand such statements in a purely behaviouristic fashion or by reference to patches, which I am willing to admit are of a similar colour to that of the sensation I am having. Let us see what it is to use these words in sensation sentences and how it is I can be said to understand them more fully than my blind friends.

We have noted that whenever I use colour words they are not meaningless to the blind. If I make physical-object sentences, e.g. "This is a brown book" or "Pillar boxes are usually red", then they show their ability to manipulate "brown" and "red" by giving the criteria which would prove the sentences true or false, i.e. the criteria of their instruments. We have seen also that, if I make sensation-sentences of the form, "I am having a red after-image", they can present me with coloured strips of paper, asking which particular shade matches the image. And in the sense of their being able to point to one shade and add, "He is seeing a colour like this", they understand the statement I make.

But supposing I close my eyes, have an image, and say, "This is red"—concentrating on the red sensation. I am not holding

up a sample when I use the words, "This is red". I just have an image and, pointing psychologically, utter the words. There is no prediction. If I were speaking about a strip of red paper I would be making a prediction, e.g. informing the blind men that if they apply their instruments the reading would be so and so. Nor am I making a hypothetical statement about my own behaviour, e.g. that if an examination were made of my nervous system then such and such would be found to be the case. I simply have a red image and say, "This is red". (That I am using words correctly is another matter: it is assumed here that I do.) In short, I make an incorrigible visual sensation statement, functioning very much like "A is A."¹

My blind friends say of me, "He is seeing something like this". And by "something like this" they mean something like the strip of red paper they hold up as a sample. That the paper is red is a hypothetical statement. It is, in fact, an inference based on certain tactual sensations they are having.

Let us suppose there is another person (Smith), in addition to myself, who has sight. He could close his eyes, use one of the colour-detecting instruments and make the same statement as the blind, i.e. "He is seeing something like this"—pointing to the strip of coloured paper. And if he confines himself to the tactual sensations and holding up the sample, then his statement functions just as it does when uttered by the blind. But Smith can do more than this. He can close his eyes and say, "He is seeing something like this"—of a similar sensation he (Smith) is having. Putting the matter briefly: The blind men's, "He sees something like this" is informative. They are making a hypothetical statement about the strip of paper held up as a sample and they are also treating my sentence ("This is red") as functioning in the same way as when they utter these words i.e. in the corrigible sense when samples are displayed. But when Smith, looking at his own red sensation, says, "He sees something like this" and says it about my red sensation, then he makes an incorrigible statement. If it is verifiable (informative, corrigible) then the criteria relevant to its verification are open to the blind as well as to Smith.

My blind friends cannot make incorrigible visual sensation sentences. They cannot point psychologically to a sensation and utter the words "This is red". All their colour sentences are hypothetical: they are not concerned with vision pure and simple. The blind men say, "This strip of paper is red", and by

¹ But not quite, for this would also make it incorrigible in the language sense.

that they mean their machines show such and such readings and that if I say I have looked then I shall confirm their statement. Should they say, "This seems red" or "This appears to be red", the sentences, although they have the look of incorrigible visual sensation sentences, are incorrigible tactuals. Their "This seems red" means "This feels such and such". And they can make these incorrigible tactual sensation sentences—or similar sentences about any sensation they are physically capable of having. They can say (e.g.) "This appears to be soft", "This seems hard", because they have tactual sensations. And if I am not deprived of this sense of touch they understand the use of tactual words as fully as I do. They are able to make incorrigible tactual sentences of the form "This is a feeling of softness", even as I am able to do with the visual. But they cannot, since they are blind, speak in a similar fashion of a visual sensation, i.e. they cannot, for example, say "This is a red sense-datum".

Translations

The position becomes even clearer when it is noticed that, should these men be given sight, they would have to learn the sensational use of colour words, and then be taught the connection between the tactual sensations they had from their instruments and the new visual sensations of colour.

We can say, therefore, that my visual sensation sentences have full meaning for my hearers only when those sentences could be true of them. My sentence "This is red", when used in the incorrigible sense indicated above, has a meaning for my blind hearers in that they can pick out certain shades of red on strips of paper and ask me to match the sensation I had. But they fail to fully understand my sentence in the sense that they cannot themselves speak in a similar way of one of their sensations. My blind friends cannot play the visual sensation game.

It must, however, be made clear as to the sense in which visual sensation language is private to me, if I alone see. Having laid down the condition of blindness for my hearers it follows from what has been said that my visual sensation language, of necessity, cannot be understood by them. Or we can put the position this way: it is logically impossible for them, being blind, to understand visual words as fully as I do. If I alone see, then I alone can fully work the visual language. It is nonsensical to say "This man is blind (in the sense laid down), but he can meaningfully utter incorrigible visual sensation sentences." But we must remember that, in a very important sense, my language is not necessarily private. It is not private of necessity in the sense that my friends' inability to see is physical—a physical

→ *synthetically necessary*

condition I have laid down for them. Nothing is so easy as to imagine their being given sight. And if they were given sight then my visual sensation language would be no longer private, for they could be taught to use the language as I now use it.

Another point I wish to draw attention to here is the connection between understanding the use of a sensation word and having (or being able to have) the appropriate sensation. I am not suggesting that understanding a word or sentence is having a particular sensation or sensations. I understand what is meant by the word "cold", but I am not feeling a bit cold at the moment. On the other hand, of course, I may have a particular sensation and not know it is called one of coldness i.e. I have not learnt the use of the word "cold", although I have had and now have a sensation of what is called "coldness". What I seek to do is to draw attention to the relationship between being physically capable of having sensations and understanding the use of the equivalent sensation words. Having or having had the sensation of red is necessary for gaining the full meaning of (being able to use) the word "red", but the sensation is not itself the meaning. My blind hearers do not lack full understanding because they have not, at the moment, a sensation of red. Nor, on the other hand, can it be said I fully understand because I might happen to have such a sensation when I speak about redness. But one of the criteria for fully understanding the word "red" is being able to say, of a red sensation, "This is red". And this is logically impossible for the blind, since it is physically impossible for them to have red sensations. Sensations are necessary for the teaching of the appropriate sensation word, but they are neither necessary nor sufficient when we say we understand.

B. In the first example it was my friends' physical inability to see which prohibited their understanding my visual language as I did. Let us look at another example where, despite the fact that people have similar sensations to those I have, I use words which they cannot (logically) understand. This would, I think, be an instance of a strictly private language.

The case is one where I give all my sensations proper names, without regarding whether that name has been used before or whether it is the same kind of sensation to which I attached, on a former occasion, another name. For example, I have a sensation, point psychologically, and say, "Tab" or "Tib".

In our former example, when I said of a sensation "This is red", there was a sense in which the sentence was incorrigible and a sense in which it was corrigible. Its incorrigibility, already

pointed out, is seen when we compare it with other sentences such as "This is a chair", where the speaker makes a prediction about the future, i.e. where further evidence (of the same kind as led to the statement) is considered a verification or refutation. When I say "This is red" of a sensation I consider no such evidence, relevant. Compare also when I say "This seems red to me", or "This appears red to me", when speaking of chairs and tables. If you proceed to show the object is black the discovery does not make my sentence wrong. In short, it is nonsensical to say, in relation to checks of this kind, "This appears red to me, but I might be mistaken about the appearance"; or—as in the circumstances indicated—"This is red, but I might be mistaken". In a similar way do my proper-naming sentences ("This is Tab" and "This is Tib") function.

There is, however, a sense in which sensation sentences may be wrong, sensation sentences of the form "This is red" and "This appears to me to be green". In this sense it is not nonsensical to suggest the possibility of mistake. The sense is that in which I can be mistaken about my use of language. Perhaps I am using the word "red" incorrectly. It may be what I have been calling "red" is, in accordance with the English language, called "green". And we can easily imagine methods for checking the possibility of this error.

With the proper-naming of sensations the possibility cannot arise. Such sentences are doubly incorrigible. Other present sensations or future sensations are irrelevant and it is also nonsensical to say "This is Tab, but I might be mistaken about the use of the word 'Tab'." There is no language system in the sense that to assert the user's conformity is to make a hypothetical assertion. The only use a proper sensation name has is that given it when attached to a present sensation, for I might have a similar sensation at a later time and give it another name. If I speak about sensations in the ordinary way (e.g. "I am having a purple after-image") the question can always be sensibly asked whether I understand the use of the words "purple" and "after-image". And should there be any doubt you can hold up samples of purple and cause me to have after-images, at the same time asking me what sensations I am having. Further checks on the correctness of my use can be made by alternating other colours etc. Is it sensible to suggest a checking, in this sense, of my proper names? If, on the other hand, I have always spoken of toothache as "Yak" and I now say "I have Yak", then the correctness of my present use of "Yak" (i.e. whether it agrees

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*consistently
misapplied*

with the use I have formerly determined) can be called in question. But this is not the kind of private naming under consideration. There is no sense in asking myself whether I understand the use of the word "Tab", as I might of the word "red", nor of my suggesting I used it wrongly as I might of "Yak" (when I have laid down a use), since the only use it has is in the particular situation where I say of a sensation "This is Tab".

It is the hypothetical nature of the use of words—that they belong to a language system—which allows one person to understand the use another makes. Smith is able to say, of my "This is red", "He is having a sensation like this". Both these sentences, as has been pointed out, are incorrigible (contrasted with physical-object sentences), but either or both may be wrong with regard to the use of words. I call my sensation "red" because I have been taught to use the word in this way: Smith, looking at his own sensation, says "He has something like this", because he trusts he knows the language system I am working on and that he himself is using the same system. If I am wrong in my use of the word "red" (i.e. not in accordance with the ordinary English usage) then Smith can correct me, or, learning what use I have, adopt my system.

But that he teaches or comes to understand me is dependent on my having a language system. What would it be like for other people to understand when I adopt the application of proper names, i.e. have no system apart from the "system" of giving such names to my sensations? I just have (e.g.) what is ordinarily called (but not so-called by me) an after-image, point psychologically and say "Tab". Perhaps in five minutes I have another and similarly coloured after-image and say "Tib". The only use each name has is when pinned to that particular sensation. If my hearer thought I had what he called an after-image and got me to look at the light and then close my eyes I might very possibly say "Tob." The only way for my hearer to learn the use of each word would be for him to have my sensation, and watch the naming. For others to understand this "language" it is necessary for them to be having my experiences: other people know the meaning of my proper names only if they have my sensations. And this is logically impossible.

Thus this "language" is necessarily private. We cannot imagine what it would be like for others to understand, since it is logically impossible for them to have my sensations.

We could, of course, add that such a "language" is not entirely meaningless to my hearers—in the very weak sense that,

if they knew I was playing this kind of game, then they would also know that each time I use a word I am having, and naming, a particular sensation.

But in what sense can I claim it has meaning for myself, that it is a language even to me? A proper name, used in this manner, would not function like "red" or "toothache", as when I speak to myself and say "This is red" or "I have toothache". In the use of these ordinary sensation words there is a sense in which I inform myself i.e. the sense in which their use is corrigible. (In the incorrigible sense, as compared with physical-object sentences, they are uninformative.) But I am only informing myself if I have used the word before in a similar situation or if I am using a word which has been used before under similar circumstances, i.e. if it belongs to a language system, conformity to which is hypothetical. When I say to myself "This is toothache", I am saying something like "This is what is called 'toothache' in the English language". To say to myself "This is Tab" does not convey this information to me, for the word "Tab" has no use apart from this instance, no meaning apart from this particular pointing.

We have here an example of a strictly private "language", but we find that the more proper-naming it becomes the less are we inclined to call it a language.

DO WE EVER THINK IN PROPOSITIONS?

By LUCIUS GARVIN

IN a paper read before the Aristotelian Society on February 3, 1930, Mr. Ryle raised the question, "Are there propositions?" and his reply was, "No." Since that time, the word "proposition," at least, has shown no disposition to drop out of the philosophers' vocabulary. Thus it is still possible for an article to appear in *Analysis* under the title, "Must We Always Think in Propositions?"—a title which apparently presupposes that we sometimes do. So, too, the recent discussions in *Analysis* about "knowing" and "thinking" have involved frequent references to the "propositions which sentences express." Yet if Mr. Ryle's argument is valid, all such references to propositions must be mistaken or, at any rate, elliptical. Reconsideration of the argument seems called for.

¹ Celia Fremlin's, January, 1938.

In his paper, Mr. Ryle not only lists a number of objections against the view that there are propositions but also offers a substitute for the proposition theory which he regards as solving the main problems which that theory was supposed to solve. Since no one has come forward to defend the theory against Mr. Ryle's strictures² and since these strictures are based upon a view of the nature of cognition which, though it is becoming increasingly fashionable, appears to me to be quite mistaken, I propose to assume the rôle of apologist for the theory attacked. First I shall examine briefly what seem to me to be the more serious objections advanced by Mr. Ryle against propositions and then proceed to an estimate of his own positive view.

I

(1) (Pp. 106-107)³ One objection urged by Mr. Ryle against propositions is that they occupy a status analogous to that of ideas in the theory of representative ideas, and are hence subject to the same criticisms. More specifically, they do not help us in explaining how, by thinking propositions, we can come to know the realities which the propositions are about. This objection, it seems to me, arises from a misinterpretation of the true nature and function of propositions. While it is true that on most representative theories of knowledge, ideas have been supposed to possess a certain efficacy in the way of affording knowledge of "cognoscenda," I know of no advocate of a theory of propositions who ever suggested that by merely being acquainted with propositions one could "know the realities which the propositions are about," if by this phrase is meant knowing the truth of the propositions. Knowledge of the truth of propositions comes, in the last analysis, only from an apprehension of facts. To object to propositions on the ground of this particular epistemological impotence is like condemning a sieve because of its failure to hold water. It is no more the office of propositions to function as facts than it is the office of sieves to function as buckets.

(2) (P. 107) A second of Mr. Ryle's objections to the

²In a discussion in the January number of *Mind*, 1931, Mr. Richard Robinson, likewise with a view to showing that there are no propositions, criticized Mr. Ryle's treatment of the question and presented his own alternative to the proposition theory. Later, in a rejoinder, (*Mind*, July, 1931) Mr. Ryle replied to Mr. Robinson and indicated, in what seemed to me a quite conclusive fashion, that the latter had not dealt at all satisfactorily with the major issues involved in the problem.

³*Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1929-30. Further page references will be to this article.

proposition theory is that if there are objective propositions, then in order that they may be "accusatives" of acts of thinking they must be objects of our knowledge. That is, to think a proposition is to have knowledge either of or about it. If, however, the argument runs, knowing is thus presupposed in the having of a proposition as an intentional object, then it is impossible to explain knowledge in terms of the "having" of propositions. Moreover, "knowing" is a form of apprehension in which the object is "simply the fact known ; no intermediating proposition is required."

But Mr. Ryle is here ignoring the ambiguity in the term "knowing" as referring on the one hand to "knowing by acquaintance" or "knowing directly," and on the other hand to "knowing about" or "knowing indirectly." We may, of course, and undoubtedly often do, refer to entertaining or thinking a proposition as "knowing" the proposition. Such an application of the term, however, is manifestly quite different from that which the advocate of the proposition theory has in mind when he speaks of explaining "knowledge" in terms of propositions. What he means to refer to in this latter use of the term is "knowledge about," i.e., knowledge which consists in the belief in true propositions on the basis of adequate evidence. What such knowledge is about, of course, is facts. Now I do not deny that these facts, like the propositions which correspond to them, may be known by acquaintance—such direct apprehension of facts providing the ultimate evidence for all "knowledge about." But I do deny that it is improper to speak of a knowledge of facts which is not direct. In the case of such indirect cognition the fact "known" is not directly present to the mind, the direct object of apprehension being the (true) proposition corresponding to the fact.

(3) (Pp. 108-109) Another criticism that Mr. Ryle makes of the proposition theory is that instead of calling propositions *true* of their corresponding facts we should more properly call them *like* or *analogous* to facts, the reason being that what we really mean when we say that a proposition is true of a fact is simply that it is similar to it in structure. To this I should reply that while it is true that the structure of a true proposition is somehow similar to that of the fact to which it corresponds, yet there is more to the relation of correspondence between proposition and fact than this simple isomorphism. For one thing the similarity must be not only formal but material as well, i.e., the elements in the fact which are in one-to-one correspondence with the ele-

ments of the proposition must be identical. Nor need the description of fact and corresponding proposition as containing the same constituents in the same order be regarded as compromising the diversity of fact and proposition. For there is a further difference between the two which may be described—though obviously quite inadequately—in this way: the fact is simply *the being in such and such an order of the constituents*, while the proposition is *that the constituents are in such and such an order*. While towards the proposition that the constituents are in such and such an order (e.g., that X has R to Y) we may adopt attitudes of believing, doubting, guessing, supposing, etc., towards the fact consisting of the constituents' being in such and such an order (i.e., X's actually having R to Y) we may not adopt these attitudes. The latter is simply *there* for our inspection, a state of affairs presented to our apprehension as being "what is the case," i.e., as the entity which determines the truth-value of what we have believed, doubted, etc.

(4) (P. 110) Mr. Ryle's concluding objection against the reality of propositions concerns the unworthiness and unattractiveness of the proposition in its rôle as substitute for fact. The argument is that when we believe or guess something, what we mean to be believing or guessing is a *fact*, so that we are bound to be disappointed if told that what we are really believing or guessing is a *proposition*. I have already contended that facts are not the sort of entities which are capable of being the objects of belief or guesses at all. Suppose, moreover, that we have believed or guessed mistakenly; in that case what we have been believing or guessing would be disqualified *a fortiori* from the status of fact, and, on the assumption that beliefs and guesses can have no objects other than facts or propositions, we should be reduced to saying that what we believed or guessed was a (false) proposition or else that we believed or guessed nothing at all. And while it may well be the source of some disappointment to discover that the proposition which we have been believing or guessing is not true but false, it should be at least some comfort to us to know that our believing or guessing were not without objects for that would be tantamount to not believing or guessing at all.

II

Turning now to an examination of Mr. Ryle's proposed substitute for the proposition theory, we find him distinguishing between the cognitive acts of "knowing" on the one hand and

"entertaining" or "thinking of . . . as" on the other. In the case of the first type of cognitive act, he asserts, there really is no problem. Here we have a form of apprehension, the object of which is, simply and directly, a fact. So that between the cognitive act of "knowing" and the fact known there is no need of any intermediating something in the form of a proposition. If, however, I am right in contending, as I did above, that there is, in addition to the direct knowing of facts, an indirect knowing or "knowing about" which does involve intermediaries, then even this first part of Mr. Ryle's doctrine is not quite so simple as he makes it out to be.

However, the real difficulties arise, as Mr. Ryle himself admits, when we turn to that form of apprehension which is known as "entertaining" or "thinking of . . . as." For the object of such apprehension, at least as far as it is known, is not fact, yet at the same time it is certainly not nothing. So it becomes Mr. Ryle's task to state what the "accusatives" of such acts are, without committing himself to the view that they are either facts or propositions. His theory is this. Whenever we think of anything at all we always think in representatives or symbols of some sort, in words or in images, for example. Symbols, however, are of two kinds in respect of their symbolizing function: they may either symbolize what is the case, or facts, or they may symbolize what is not the case. In the first instance, they may be called standard symbols, or standard statements of fact, while in the second instance they may be called quasi-symbols. The intelligibility of a quasi-symbol lies in the fact that we can tell by an examination of it that "it is like what it would be *if* such and such were the fact and the fact was stated in a standard statement." (P. 121) Now in understanding a standard statement of fact, the statement itself is not a *constituent* of the fact (save in cases of statements about themselves); but in understanding a quasi-statement-of-fact, the fact known is *about* the statement, so that the statement is a constituent of the fact. "*This* fact, however, is not anywhere *stated*, but only exhibited." (P. 122) So that understanding a statement "consists in knowing *if* *what* was the case would the statement state a fact." (P. 122) Understanding the statement "X is Y," for example, is a case of knowing about the statement "X is Y" that it is as if X were Y.

Let us ask now whether Mr. Ryle's theory is really a satisfactory substitute for the proposition theory. The question may be raised at the very beginning whether Mr. Ryle's doctrine is not weakened by the fact that it is based upon the supposition

that all of our thinking is in terms of images or symbols of some sort. I do not believe that Mr. Ryle is here subscribing to the view, held by many psychologists, that thinking consists simply in the continuous passage before the mind of a flux of image-content. The fact that he speaks of images and sentences as being symbolizing media which represent facts and other referents for our interpreting minds indicates that he regards thinking as a process of cognition which takes place *through* or *by means of* the image-content. But is it really necessary, in order to think of anything, to conjure up some sort of intermediating symbol to serve as a bridge whereby our minds may travel across to what they wish to think about? Certainly there is no unanimity of opinion on this point. And the fact that the matter thus remains *sub judice* leaves open the possibility that, on some occasions at least, we may carry on our acts of cognition without any use of symbols whatsoever. But if, as a matter of fact, we are able to entertain something that we do not know to be a fact without the use of symbols or quasi-symbols, then clearly Mr. Ryle's substitute for the proposition theory, since it depends for its validity upon the doctrine that all our thinking *is* in terms of symbols, is just so far unsatisfactory.

But even supposing that symbols were required in acts of apprehension of the type of "entertaining" or "thinking of . . . as," another question arises. Is it the case that in entertaining, for example, the possibility that X is Y , we do so by using the symbol " X is Y " in the way in which Mr. Ryle describes? While there is no doubt a very good sense in which the sentence " X is Y " represents the situation, X is Y , for us, it is doubtful whether it does so by presenting to us or exhibiting to us the fact that this sentence is of such a grammatical structure that it would represent the situation, X is Y , if there were such a situation. Indeed in our ordinary employment of symbols it is not likely that the symbol ever enters into our conscious interpretation of it at all. And if our use of symbols *is* thus unconscious, then the symbol can scarcely be said to serve as a constituent of the "accusative" of our act of entertaining.

Assuming, however, that Mr. Ryle were right in making the symbol, or more precisely the quasi-symbol, a constituent of the object of our apprehension in such cases as we are now concerned with, could his analysis even with that concession be said to be satisfactory? Let us inquire more explicitly into the nature of the object of which the quasi-symbol is declared to be a constituent. This object Mr. Ryle describes as a fact, a fact about the symbol

to the effect that it is like what it would be if such and such were the case. Now entertaining anything, asserts Mr. Ryle, consists in knowing a fact of this sort. And in this case the words "if such and such were the case" surely represent one constituent of the fact. But by Mr. Ryle's own hypothesis, such and such's being the case, since it is represented by a quasi-symbol only, is not a fact. So the question still remains what we are thinking of when we are thinking of such and such's being the case. And I fail to see how any statement that such and such's being the case has a relation to symbols or quasi-symbols of any sort can help us in the least in finding an answer to this question. The plausible answer is that thinking of such and such's being the case is simply entertaining the proposition that such and such *is* the case. And in so doing, so far as I can see, no symbols are at all required. But if they were required and were required in the way which Mr. Ryle describes, then the facts of which they would become constituents would possess as further constituents the very entities which the introduction of the symbols was calculated to dispense with—namely, propositions.

But there is a further and still more fundamental difficulty with Mr. Ryle's attempt to get rid of propositions. Understanding the statement "X is Y" he describes as a case of knowing about the statement "X is Y" that it is as if X were Y. But this clearly cannot be taken to be equivalent to what we ordinarily mean when we say that we are thinking "of X as being Y" or are "entertaining the notion that X is Y." For if these were taken as equivalences, then if we were to go on and *believe* what we had been entertaining or thinking, we should be believing what we already knew, namely that the statement "X is Y" is as if X were Y. So "thinking of X as being Y" must mean more than merely understanding the statement "X is Y." And so Mr. Ryle tells us it means "thinking of X in the same way as one would think of it if it were Y and—we must add—one knew it." (P. 122) And by "in the same way" he means "in the same sentence" or "in the same image." Thus, he observes, whether or not I know that Smith is taller than Jones, I can nevertheless "think of Smith in just the same way as I would if I knew him to be taller than Jones, namely, in the visual image of him towering over Jones." (P. 123) And while this image may not *represent* a fact, it is in any case "a constituent of the hypothetical fact that the image depicts their relative heights if and only if Smith is taller than Jones."

Now while it is possible that we may employ an image of this

sort as a means or an aid in thinking of Smith as being taller than Jones, it seems quite wrong to say that the mere having of this image before one's consciousness itself *constitutes* the act of thinking of Smith as being taller than Jones. For suppose that we make the test of asking what in this case we should be believing if we were to believe what we were thinking. Plainly believing that what was before our consciousness was an *image* of Smith-as-being-taller-than-Jones would not do, since this would not at all be to believe that *Smith* was taller than Jones. Nor would it be a satisfactory interpretation to say that what we were entertaining was simply the hypothetical fact that the image was such that it depicted the relative heights of Smith and Jones provided that it was the case that Smith was taller than Jones. For clearly we might well assent to this hypothetical fact and still remain perfectly consistent in *denying* that Smith was taller than Jones.

And if, finally, thinking of Smith as taller than Jones in a visual image be interpreted as thinking that the visual image is such that it represents something which is an actual state of affairs, then what we have before us as "accusative" of our thought is something quite different from the above-described hypothetical fact, and quite possibly may not be a fact at all. Indeed, if this be the correct interpretation of Mr. Ryle's view it seems inevitable that he is committed to the view that he is endeavouring to avoid, namely, the view that in thinking of Smith as being taller than Jones we are entertaining a proposition, not perhaps the simple proposition, "Smith is taller than Jones," but at least the longer, though none the less genuine, proposition, "This image of Smith-being-taller-than-Jones represents a fact."

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